DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 260 508 EA 017 956

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TITLE Early Prevention of School Failure.
PUB DATE 85
NOTE 6p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Cognitive Style; Curriculum Guides; *Developmental Disabilities; Educational Change; Elementary Secondary Education; Evaluation; Learning Disabilities; *Learning Modalities; Recordkeeping; Remedial Programs; *Screening Tests; Skill Analysis; Skill Development; Student Development
IDENTIFIERS *Early Prevention of School Failure; Nation at Risk (A)

ABSTRACT

The Early Prevention of School Failure (EPSF) program developed by Dr. Luceille Werner is presented. The program is designed to identify and remediate developmental deficiencies of four-, five-, and six-year-old children and has been accepted in the National Diffusion Network as a nationally validated program. The main program components are screening and team conferencing, and systematic remediation and individualized followup. Five tests are used in the screening process: (1) the Peabody Picture Vocabulary, (2) the Visual Motor Integration test, (3) the Goodenough Draw-a-Person, (4) the Revised Motor Activity Scale, and (5) the Preschool Language Scale. The remediation part of the program is done through participation in daily modality periods in which the skills needed are practiced. The program provides curriculum guides, sources, and ideas for materials, as well as activity guides for teacher use. A long term evaluation of the program strongly suggests EPSF has positive long range effects. (MD)

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EARLY PREVENTION OF SCHOOL FAILURE

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1985

Anyone who is associated with Education today realizes the pressures that is being placed on the public educational system. At this very moment educators are being forced to deal with a changing society which places additional pressure on both the system and on those who have chosen it as their livelihood. There has been an enormous increase in basic knowledge and process, all based on research and study, which says to us that we as educators can and must do more to assist children in their educational endeavors.

Education and our society is truly at a National Crossroads, and we must all accept the challenges put upon us to meet the needs of our children, their parents, our schools, and this nation.

Beginning with "The Nation at Risk" report and finishing with all the research we must realize that our society is rapidly changing and that educators are being handed the responsibility for meeting the needs of the new social structure. One most alarming fact is that of the evident baby boom which will be placing additional pressure on the already crowded and underfinanced educational system. By the year 1990 there will be an additional need for educators in this nation for more than 200,000 educators over and above the numbers presently in the profession. This need comes at a time when nearly fifty percent of the existing educator across the nation are nearing retirement. To compound the problem even further there are only two percent of today's college graduates who are willing to enter the profession. "Excellence" will become increasingly more difficult.

EARLY PREVENTION OF SCHOOL FAILURE

Society itself is changing. Our schools are being directly effected by the social makeup of this country. Nearly forty percent of the school aged children in this country today come from single parent families. To compound the problem even further many families are finding it increasingly difficult to make a living on a single income. As a result nearly fifty percent of the two parent families find themselves in a situation where both parents must work outside the home. Schools are enrolling more children who are developmentally delayed as a direct result of the lack of experience. There is increasing pressure for public schools to provide these families with services previously not considered to be the responsibility of education, services

such as infant care, day care, preschool, and developmental remediation programs.

These and other social and educational changes have helped to identify the ever increasing need for educators to provide a systematic and effective program for identifying and remediating developmental deficiencies in early childhood. In so doing we will be more able to provide a quality and effective education for our children, our most endangered and most valuable national resource.

Dr. Luceille Werner, program founder, describes the program as being "designed to prevent school failure by the early identification and remediation of developmental deficiencies of four, five, and six year old children, deficiencies that could adversely effect school performance." These deficiencies are a result of the lack of early experiences, development, and maturation and are not an indication of the individual's intellectual capabilities. In schools all across the United States today children are confronted with the tasks of learning academic skills beyond their levels of development which often initiates long term learning difficulties in our children. The end result is that schools and government spend time, money, and valuable resources in attempting to remediate those learning difficulties. At the same time many children are lost forever as a direct result of being labeled "Learning Disabled" when their only crime was being "learning different" and simply not developmentally ready to assume the academic skills that were identified as appropriate for their grade assignment (which by the way was determined in an arbitrary and capricious manner by the state legislature and by social pressures as well).

In 1971 Dr. Werner, in response to an identified need, began to develop the Early Prevention of School Failure program. After three years of research and development the program was implemented in Peotone, Illinois. It was later accepted into the National Diffusion Network as a Nationally Validated program which is adaptable, exportable, inexpensive and provides for a statistically based educational program.

There are two main components of the program, first, the screening and team conferencing and second the systematic remediation and follow-up individualized educational program for each individual child in the program.

During the screening portion of the program the children are screened to determine the level of development in five modalities; fine motor, gross motor, language (receptive and expressive), auditory (memory and discrimination), and visual (memory and discrimination). The screening staff also identifies the child's learning style. During the one and one-half hour that it takes to screen the children the

parents are given an extensive orientation to the program. Immediately following the screening the entire screening team meets to confer about each child in order to identify the children's strengths and weaknesses and to plan an appropriate educational program for the child in the up and coming months.

The screening devices used to screen the children include three nationally validated screeners and two that were developed specifically for the EPSF program. All five screeners are nationally normed and/or provide valid and reliable statistical data for the classroom teacher and the parents in order that the child can work on the areas of their greatest weaknesses, while the child's strengths can be accentuated. Used as screeners in the process are the following devices: 1) the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, which checks the child's receptive language and vocabulary development, 2) the Visual Motor Integration test, which checks for visual discrimination and fine muscle control, 3) the Goodenough Draw-a-Person, which checks for fine motor control and gives some indication of social and emotional maturation, 4) the Revised Motor Activity Scale, which checks both gross and fine motor development while determining dominant hand, eye, and foot preferences, and 5) The Pre-school Language Scale, which checks development in auditory discrimination and memory, visual discrimination and memory, and motor development. The observations made during the screening assist in identifying the child's learning style and play a major role in determining the strengths and the areas of concern for each child. The goal of the screening is to provide the classroom teacher and the other support staff with as much information about the individual child so as to prevent failure through a systematic and appropriate educational program which will meet those individual strengths and weaknesses.

Once the screening and the planning is completed the major portion of the program comes into play. That is the implementation of the management portion of the program that will assist in remediating the developmental deficiencies of the children in the high risk category of the five modalities while accentuating the moderate and high strength areas each child has demonstrated. This is done through student participation in daily modality periods led by teachers, parents, or aids in which the diagnosed pre-academic skills are practiced. These modality periods last an average of twenty to thirty minutes daily five days per week. During this time the children practice their skills under the supervision of the classroom teacher, a specialist, a para-professional aid, or a parent volunteer. The program assists the classroom teacher by providing curriculum guides, sources and ideas for inexpensive commercial and homemade materials, and activities guides which are indexed to the developmental skills in each of the five modality areas and

emphasize practice with the activities on the concrete, the semi-concrete, and the abstract levels. A format within the management system provides for the simplification of record keeping as the children practice and master certain skills. This format is usually adapted by the adopting teacher to meet that teacher's own teaching style and classroom needs. At any rate the program provides for the opportunity for the teacher to chart or track each students' progress, and keep a record of what activities and skills have been practiced and mastered. The remainder of the district's adopted curriculum is maintained in its original format and can be presented in the appropriate teaching style to meet all of the children's different learning styles. The modality instruction time is based on a series of thirty-two readiness skills which are listed sequentially and must be 95% mastered on a concrete, a semi-concrete, and an abstract basis before the child can be expected to master the academic skills of learning to read, write, and do simple mathematical operations as expected in most first grade classrooms.

As mention previously, the program provides five guides which when used properly will aid the teacher in the classroom as well as with the pre-academic skills. These are: 1) Building Readiness Through Perceptional Skills, 2) Portable Resource Kit Guide, 3) Recipes for Homemade Materials, 4) The Teacher's Classroom Management Guide, and 5) The Resource Index Guide.

EPSF EVALUATION UPDATE

By: Judy Judy, EPSF PROJECT CONSULTANT

Ongoing evaluations remain a very important part of the continued success and funding of Early Prevention of School Failure. During the past summer, evaluation data was collected and analysed on 86 NDN adoptions in addition to the State of Hawaii, 19 migrant sites in Illinois and the year two testing results from the second long-range study.

The results of the various evaluations continue to suggest the success and effectiveness of the EPSF program. The Early Prevention staff of consultants and certified trainers wish to commend the numerous dedicated teachers and school districts for the outstanding job they are doing in implementing the program and helping to insure success for all children.

The yearly evaluation reports have always suggested that the program was successful. However, there was still question as to the long term effects. In September of 1979, the EPSF professional staff with the assistance of outside evaluator Dr. Kenneth Strand, developed a statistical procedure that could be used to evaluate the long term

effects of the program. The study included both experimental and control groups. Both groups were evaluated yearly for the three year period.

During 1982, the results of the entire three years were analyzed. The results strongly suggest the positive long-range effects of EPSF. The analysis showed that the experimental group gains (children receiving EPSF) were consistently greater than the matched control group gains (children who did not receive EPSF).

Another long-range study was begun two years ago. Analysis of that data further supports the success of the EPSF program. Copies of the "Long-Range Study Report" can be obtained from the Peotone office.

Another exciting development with EPSF evaluations, is the recently completed EVALUATION SUMMARY OF THE EPSF PROJECT: A NATIONALLY VALIDATED PROGRAM 1971-81. This 57 page document overviews the history, development and statistical evaluation of the EPSF program since 1971. Written by Dr. Strand with assistance of Luceille Werner, this document has recently been selected for inclusion in ERIC/Elementary and Early Childhood Education. A summary was in a recent issue of Resources in Education RIE. (The complete document will be available through ERIC Document Reproduction Service (DRS) in microfilm and hard copy; ERIC - No: ED219153). In addition, copies will be available through the Peotone office for a $5 fee to cover postage and handling costs.

The "Long-Range Study Report" and ERIC submission should be quite helpful to many individuals and district around the country who are involved in research concerning EPSF. Both documents are valuable and exciting developments in our ongoing efforts to asses the effects of EPSF.

Anyone wishing more information or considering adoption of the EPSF program can contact the following:

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3. The National Diffusion Network State Facilitator for your state (usually found in the state depart-of education in that state).